

One campus's experience of
implementing national academic literacy
embedding initiatives in Health Sciences
at
Australian Catholic University
Academic Skills Unit (ASU)
St Patrick's, Melbourne

Presented by Mark Eggins
(mark.eggins@acu.edu.au) at Critical Intersections: the 12th Biennial Conference of the
Association for Academic Language and Learning, University of Wollongong 25-27th
November 2015

Session overview

Key embedding concepts

Institutional background

Discipline background

ASU approach to embedding

Some issues

Some possible 'solutions'

References

Key Embedding Concepts

- Students require a **range** of academic literacy competencies. These skills are best acquired if embedded **within their own disciplinary concepts** (Hunter & Tse, 2013).
- Embedding requires **collaboration** between stakeholders including students, discipline academics and AALL staff (Baik & Greg, 2009).

Briguglio embedding model (summary)

1. Student **self-access** materials (generic or unit/task specific)
2. ALL staff in central, campus or faculty-based centres (**generic classes & 1 on 1 appointments**)
3. ALL staff **collaboration** with **discipline academics** (guest lectures/tutorials, materials and assessment development, credit language units)
4. Language development **fully integrated** in subjects

Ref: Briguglio (2012)

Briguglio model (some questions)

- Are self-access materials least desirable and is full integration of academic literacy support most desirable?
- Does this model reflect a possible role for peer learning?
- Should collaboration be seen as:
 - between ALL staff and academics only?
 - fixed in ALL commitment?
 - co-developing scaffolding for students and/or skills development for academics by AAL staff?

Institutional Background: ACU

- Multi-campus across several states
- National focus thus linked by technology (video conferencing, lecture broadcasts)
- 30 000 + students (VIC 10 000 + = 33%) in 2014
- Importance of embedding reflected in several recent documents including:
 - ACU English Language Policy (2014)
 - ACU Learning and Teaching Framework 2014 – 2017 (2014)

ACU English Language Policy (excerpts)

- English language proficiency integrated into **curriculum design** and **assessment**.
- Course design includes language proficiency required of graduates in the **discipline** for **workplace practicums** and **employment**.
- **Course approval** and **review** assesses how English language proficiency is articulated in course design.

Ref: ACU (2014)

ACU Learning and Teaching Framework 2014 – 2017 ‘Learning for Life’ (excerpt)

- Hallmark One (Guarantee the distinctiveness of the ACU Graduate):

Ensure that ACU’s graduate attributes are embedded in the curriculum, with course design evidencing the teaching and assessment of academic and information literacy and numeracy.

Ref: ACU (2014)

ASU embedding context

- **Planning and production** of embedded academic literacy programs at ACU typically developed **nationally**
- **Presentation locally** (all campuses)
 - more consistent and equitable
 - obviates need to ‘re-invent the wheel’

Discipline Background: Health Sciences

- Represented on all campuses
- One of the largest HS faculties in Australia
- 12 838 students (42%) = largest cohort of ACU
- Produced the most Australian nursing graduates (past five years)
- A variety of pathways including TAFE
- Supervised field and clinical experience
- Professional accreditation

Ref: ACU (2015)

Health Sciences (con't)

- Six national Schools:
 1. School of Allied Health (includes Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy)
 2. School of Exercise Science
 3. School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine
 4. School of Physiotherapy
 5. School of Psychology
 6. School of Science

Discipline Background: HS Assessments

- 'Holistic' approach:
 - all aspects of the person considered
 - alternative treatment modalities covered where relevant
- Evidence Based Practice:
 - 'evidence' includes
 1. case studies (text or video)
 2. 'practice' and clinical experiences
 3. the literature (theories/models)
 - practice (current or future)
- Linked tasks (Task A sets up Task B)
- Tasks acculturate students into the discipline ('culture') including:
 - genres (i.e. essays, reports, portfolios, reflections and annotated bibliographies)
 - assumptions & vocabulary

ASU approach to embedding

- Collaborative (team based):
 1. initial meeting (academics and ASU reps for each campus)
 2. follow up meetings (ASU only)
 3. final meeting (all)
- Use of (annotated) exemplars
- Peer work activities
- Integration of online resources (LEO)

ASU approach to embedding (con't)

- Different formats including:
 - team teaching in a lecture
 - team teaching (one in a lecture) other campuses receive broadcast
 - develop material for tutorials (team or academic presents)
 - advise academics on presentation of previously developed material
 - out of semester session for identified 'at risk' students
 - identified 'at risk' students referred to consultations
 - online resources linked to subject LEO pages

Some Challenges

- Sourcing exemplars
- Role demarcation
- Academic 'dependence'
- One ALL member per campus involved
- Development all done 'virtually'
- Some students' poor discipline vocabulary
- Closing the 1 on 1 feedback loop

Some possible 'solutions'

- Student writing database
- Academics' essay bank
- Hybrid 'generic' workshops (discipline specific activities based on a draft/task/rubric/source)
- 'Collegiate deference' (roles noted in PP notes)
- Map out embedding over a whole course
- Co-develop more vocabulary resources (including in collocations, idioms)
- Better utilisation of student data (from 1 on 1s, drop ins)

Student Writing Database

- Coded by:
 - year
 - discipline
 - course
 - enrolment year
 - genre
 - subject code
 - version (draft or final)
 - mark
- Whole or excerpts can be used to scaffold skills in planning, structure, style and referencing

OVERVIEW continued...

Session/ Time	Activity type	Topic	Staff involvement
Session 4 10:40-11:10am	➤ Discussion & individual practice on paraphrasing	➤ Integrating evidence: (Paraphrasing skills and using evidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academic presents briefly on what they look for in how students use evidence ➤ ASU provides information on paraphrasing skills
Session 5 11:10-11:30am	➤ Large group & small group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ APA Referencing & exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common problems with referencing presentation ➤ Students review their own assignment to identify where they lost referencing marks 	➤ ASU & academic together present common problems:
Session 6 11:30-11:40am	➤ Large group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wrap up ➤ Back to the butcher's paper – what else would you add or change? 	➤ Everybody
Session 7 11:40am-12noon	➤ Individual: students reflect on own assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review first assignment, comments, feedback, learning ➤ Goal setting for next assignment 	➤ Everybody
12:00 noon	Finish		

Common mistakes in assignment 1

- Referencing and citation errors
- Lack of a clear structure
- Lack of an introduction or conclusion
- No topic sentences
- Not backing up statements
- Low quality evidence
- Not setting the scene in the introduction
- Grammar and spelling errors

Paragraph 3: Language use

The **dramatic symptoms** of schizophrenia **can be** very isolating for **sufferers**. Heidi describes being teased by schoolmates and says that she knows that people are 'consciously avoiding' her in the street when her **symptoms** are visually **manifested**. One incident that Heidi recalls is when she suffered a psychotic **episode** that presented itself as her screaming and running through traffic and nobody came to her **aid**. **Investigation** into the **effect** of social **isolation** **can be** an **aggravating factor** in the **frequency** and **severity** of **instances** of psychosis in **sufferers** (Jiang et al., 2013). Although Heidi does not specifically speak about her **relationship** with her family, Koujalgi and Patil (2013) found that familial **relationships** experience **significant strain** due to the **burden** of **caring for** and **supporting** a relative with a schizophrenic **disorder**.

- **Red: Medical** **Blue: More general** **Green: shows the voice of the writer**
- Underlining: Adjectives used to be more specific
- **Purple: Inappropriate language for mental health**

Mapping embedding across a course

Unit	Topic	Skills	Delivery	Notes
Year: 1				
Semester: 2				
Subject code: Subject name: Week and lecturers:	Annotated Bibliographies	Academic writing, summary	Lecture: Campus based delivery	LEO unit on APA referencing
Subject code: Subject name: Week and lecturers:	Critical Appraisals	Academic writing, critical thinking	Lecture: Campus based delivery	Could be tutorial activity next year
Year: 2				
Semester: 1				
Subject code: Subject name: Week and lecturers:	Presentation	Presentation skills	Online resource followed by tutorial activity	

References

Australian Catholic University. (2014). *English Language Policy*. Retrieved from

https://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/682535/english-language-policy.pdf

Australian Catholic University. (2014). *ACU Learning and Teaching Framework 2014 – 2017 – Learning for Life*.

Retrieved from http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/695585/Learning_for_Life_Framework.pdf

Australian Catholic University. (2015). *Pocket Statistics*. Retrieved from

http://www.acu.edu.au/_media/documents/opsm/2015_Pocket_Statistics.pdf

Baik, C., & Greg, J. (2009) Improving academic outcomes of undergraduate ESL Students: the case of a discipline specific academic skills program. *Higher Education Research and Development* 28(4), 401-416. doi: 10.1080/07294360903067005

Briguglio, C., & Watson, S. (2014). Embedding English language across the curriculum in higher education:

A continuum of development support. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 37(1). Retrieved from

<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=137632942318931;res=IELIND>

Hunter, K., & Tse, H. (2013). Making disciplinary writing and thinking practices an integral part of academic content teaching.

Active Learning in Higher Education. 14(3), 227–239. doi: 10.1177/1469787413498037